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EDITORIAL

Almost the last words of the Gospel of Matthew are: Go ye therefore and teach all nations. The marginal reading for "teach" is "make disciples or Christians of all nations." The fifteenth verse of the last chapter of Mark reads: "Go ye therefore into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature." Such words seem to indicate that the last and most important charge which their Risen Christ laid upon the disciples was this mandate that they become apostles or proselytizers.

At first sight it seems obvious that Jesus wanted his religion, its beliefs, duties, and hopes, to be given to the world—not only offered but urged upon the world with confident insistence. On second thought we wonder. Was it like Jesus to want his religion forced upon others? More than once he refuses to give the people any sign by which to establish his super-human power, and the validity of his message. In fact, he seems to have regretted his own power to do wonders, as though he was embarrassed by it. "See thou tell no man." "Thy faith hath made thee whole." He wanted no sudden conversion. He preferred to light his candle, set it on the stand, and let it shed its quiet steady glow "to all that are in the house," so that they might see it, think it over privately, and reach a deliberate conviction.

Moreover there is the question: How much confidence can we put in the birth and post-resurrection stories? Did Jesus really speak those words: "Make disciples or Christians of all nations"? It was still to be ten or fifteen years before the word "Christian" would be coined, and even then not in Jerusalem but in Antioch.

However that may be, here is our question: Just what is the duty of people who believe they have made a valuable religious discovery? William James once said: "The chronic fault of liberalism is its lack of speed and passion." Should we wince at the criticism? Or do our utmost to cure the fault? Follow Timothy's advice—preach our gospel; be instant in season, out of season? It is a private question which each must decide for himself. It is like Mulvaney' love-making: "Every man must do it his own way." Some will choose the example of Paul who resolved to know but one thing; or of Cato who never opened his mouth without saying: "Delenda est Carthago."

But if some of us should prefer to remember that a soul's religion is that soul's most sacred possession; that no discovery is so authentic as that which the soul makes of and by itself; that no change is so far-reaching and disturbing as a change in habits of religious thought and hope and prayer; and if, remembering these things some of us should prefer to grant others the freedom of judgment we claim for ourselves, and should be content to let our candle burn on its stand steadily and quietly, after the manner of candles, and let other people decide for themselves, without speed or passion, what they shall do about it, we would be not very far from the spirit and manner of Jesus.

C. E. P.

Prayer of Migoshi San, a blind leper

O shining morning when I kneel to pray,
My loathsome blinded body all forgot,
The door shut.
I together with my thoughts
Alone, amid the loveliness of dawn.

Faint voices murmuring
Echo in my heart
Lovely melodies;
Far off, wild geese honking
"You are old, old, old" —
Baby hands before the storm
Lost and cold.

As I sit listening, sightless, apart,
All voices whispering, echo in my heart.

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THE UNFINISHED LIFE

Richard H. Huff

"But they fled out of the tomb, for they were seized with terror and beside themselves. They said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid of . . . ." Mark 16: 8

The book of Mark ends with this incomplete sentence. They were afraid of . . . . We are not told what they feared. During the Second Century, writers read this trailing sentence and tried to add something to make it recite better. They added many verses to give the story a happy ending.

Life, however, does not always have a happy ending. This incomplete trailing sentence is a symbol of the frustration, fear and despair that marked the reaction of the followers of Jesus after his death on the cross. They didn't know what to think about the terrible thing that had been done to their leader, and they did not know what to do about the future. They were faced with the overpowering job of starting the work of Jesus all over again. They were simply terrified at the prospects.

Wallace Beery, the movie actor, asked Carmen Miranda if she would teach him how to dance the rumba. Carmen asked him how much he knew about the rumba. He said, "You had better start from scratch." To which Carmen replied, "With you I will have to start from behind scratch!"

So much of living is like that. Starting out with an even break is one thing. Starting over again with an uneven break is quite another thing.

I knew a man who came home from the Navy to find that his home was shot to pieces. He tried to make a success of his marriage. Picking up the pieces and starting all over again is tough going. It is easy to get married, but when things go wrong and the whole thing is almost on the rocks, the job of making it work is never an easy one.

I know a woman who was in an automobile accident. She will never look the same again. Everything in her life has changed. All the odds turned against her after this accident. She is a different person and much the worse for the change. But she is faced with the job of starting all over again and she is doing a wonderful job.

I know a boy who lies in a sanitarium with tuberculosis. He had made a good start in business and the future looked good. Then this disease hit him hard. He has the job of trying to make a new start . . . against heavy odds for the rest of his life. He will make it, but it will cost him all his courage. Starting from behind scratch is never easy; we get panicky; we become terrified; we feel sorry for ourselves at first; we envy those who faired better than we did: but we have to choose between total failure and partial success.

This was the kind of thing that faced the followers of Jesus after he had been killed. At the start of his ministry he had been received mostly as a popular young man by the people. Now the whole picture was changed. He and his followers were no longer received. The bitter warning by the Romans that was put upon the cross was not easily forgotten: "The King of the Jews." This is the kind of thing you can expect from Rome if any other young men get the idea of building up some kind of kingdom here in Palestine.

His followers chanced arrest by the Romans. They were hated and pushed down by the ruling Jews in the local churches. Jesus was the only one who really understood all the principles he talked about. The idea of his followers going out and teaching these things sounded preposterous to them. Yet he had made it clear to them that he expected them to carry on his work if anything should happen to him. What could they do? Where would they start? Who would listen to them?

This situation which the disciples faced was no different from the situations people face every day. A man will ask these same questions when he does not know what to do. He will always be puzzled like this when he gets to the end of his rope.

In such a situation a man desperately needs to believe in something. Many times the reason he is confused is because he has lost faith in himself, his neighbors, his world. When all kinds of doubts and convictions that life is futile are thrown in on top of an emergency situation, it is not easy to find something in which you can believe. But if you can, order will be restored to your religious unrest and you will find a force to help you unravel your mistakes and work out your problems.

Such a force the disciples found after much groping. About three days after the death of Jesus, a rumor spread. It was a simple rumor. It was being whispered around that Jesus was alive again. Of course, no one took this seriously . . . at first. It was too fantastic to imagine. This story of the women sounded to them like nonsense; they could not believe it. But one thing is certain beyond all possible doubt: the disciples actually came to the place where they really believed it. The effect on their lives was electric.

Their weakness vanished; their fears diminished; their vitality amplified itself ten thousand fold. And they had a message, a purpose, a reason to live by and to die by. They discovered a force that made them act and live like supermen, outthinking, outworking and outliving everyone about them. Their belief in the resurrection marked the beginning of the great movement we call Christianity. Their lives after this point remain a challenge to any person who calls himself a Christian. Those early Christians present an awe-inspiring picture of human nature keyed to a high vision.

What does all this mean? To those in the ancient world it meant that they had discovered a power that nothing could stop. Death could not hold him who had first learned to use this power. They believed that the same power would carry them through life's worst ordeals—even death when it came.

What does all this mean to us? Can we believe that this thing really happened to Jesus. Yes, you can. But don't expect to understand it. The only way I know that you can believe it is by a sheer act of faith. It cannot be explained. It cannot be understood. The time may come in the history of the world when psychiatry or some other science will draw pictures of how dead cells can be restored to living cells in the human body. But it can't be done right now.

You do not have to believe in the resurrection of Jesus or in your own immortality to be a good person. You can grow in spirit for a lifetime without having to decide on this question.

Easter means two things to me. It is the celebration of the beginning of Christianity. And I humbly take off my hat while the disciples of old pass by on parade. We celebrate their victory over handicaps of every sort in their loyalty to a faith that sent them all over the earth, alive with the power of God.

The other meaning of Easter to me is this. At this season we are reminded that the world in which we live is literally throbbing with power—and we haven't started to use it all yet. We have begun to stir up and harness nuclear energy, but man's spirit is still dead. It is a time to live on tip-toe anticipating the wonderful hour when the energy that is now in man's hand gets into his heart, when his spirit flies higher and faster than his jet planes, when his happiness and enjoyment of life is just as popular as social security is now.

"Before the blossoming of Spring
Lies winter, bleak and cold
There must be stormy clouds and rain
Before the buds unfold!"

Could it be that all the violence and hatred and sickness of our world today is but the winter in man's soul? If so, then it is up to us to speed the day when springtime will come to our world.

True we have to start from scratch—yes, even from behind scratch—but the wished for things within us will continue to call until we dedicate ourselves one by one to the job of making and keeping a better world.

JESUS OF NAZARETH

Charles De Vries

In this brief statement, I wish to consider Jesus as a brother, one of our own flesh and blood, a fellow traveler and pilgrim on life's way, who lived before us, but who walked the same essential road that every one of us must go. He suffered and struggled and achieved; he thought and wondered and prayed; he laughed and cried as all of us do. He remains one of us—a son of man and a son of God. However, because of his faith and teachings, he has become an outstanding spiritual leader.

With this understanding, let us look at or consider him through some windows, through which the light of his personality comes to bless the world. These are found in the New Testament account of his sayings.

The first window is this—his central idea of God as the Divine King and Parent of us all. God the Creator is both King and Parent of all men. Jesus mentions this idea of the Kingdom of God, or Kingdom of Heaven, again and again in his sayings. This is his main idea and belief about life.

He started his preaching by saying, "Repent, for the Kingdom of God is at hand." All human life was sacred, and divinely inspired with the spirit of an ever present God, who is both Sovereign King and a loving Parent. God is Supreme, and his Sovereign will overrules the wishes and wills of men. However, the nature of God is also that of a Loving Parent, in whom we can trust as children trust in their parents. To him we can pray—"Our Father, who art in heaven."

Therefore, life for us in this faith, is a submission to the Divine Will, a trust in the Divine Love. This does not explain the Great Mystery, but is a religious attitude which has captured the devotion of millions of human beings.

A second window through which shines the faith of Jesus is this—that of the Parable of the Lost Sheep, which illustrated the penitent spirit for imperfect human beings. One sheep out of a hundred is lost and, when found, the owner rejoices with his friends and neighbors. "So," says Jesus, "there is more joy in heaven over a single sinner who repents, than over ninety-nine good people who feel that they do not need to repent." The same truth is implied in his observation of the penitent publican.

Here we see the Great Teacher's understanding of the human heart, and the way of its growth into noble character. He said—"I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." So only the penitent will really understand and follow him.

Life is a process of perfecting the imperfect, and the best of folks always realize how imperfect they are. So joy in heaven and joy on earth comes as we go onward in the penitent spirit. Through such a window, the Master shows us what we really are.

A third window through which to see Jesus of Nazareth is that of his observation of the poor widow's giving. The poor widow gave just one cent, but it was all she had. She gave away what she needed; the others gave from their surplus. Here, according to Jesus, is the secret of the abundant life—in self-denial.

When we give away what we need; when we apparently throw away our lives for others, then we find them. The abundant life is found in the over-flowing, unselfish spirit. As is expressed in the best attested saying of Jesus—"He that saves his life shall lose it; but he that loses his life shall find it." The unusual appeal of his death on the cross verifies this same truth. Here is another picture of the character in this noble soul.

Another window through which we see his understanding of life is that of his visit with Martha and Mary. What a profound and permanent truth is pictured here. The busy Martha, worried about many things; the quiet, waiting Mary, finding herself, and peace for her soul as she listened to Jesus.

Mary made the great discovery which every person must make for his personal salvation; namely, that *being* comes before *having*, or *doing*. The soul is supreme and, unless we first of all come to ourselves as such, all possessions and work and chasing about are wind. The same truth is implied in the saying—"First seek the kingdom of God," and "What shall it profit a person to gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" Here again, we see the real character of Jesus of Nazareth.

These are valuable and permanent truths for humanity. What a challenge to follow such a leader. Dare we?

There is no greater. That is why we believe in the Leadership of Jesus. In him we find pure religion summarized in love to God and love to man. It is life and religion—simple, profound, positive, constructive, inclusive of all good; fulfilling life to its highest reaches.

In Jesus of Nazareth we have the pull, the call of a great soul. We may live, each one of us our life, inspired, uplifted by the faith and spirit that was in him. He is still a long ways on ahead. May God help us as we try to live the divine way with him.

"WHAT IS A CHRISTIAN?"

George E. McDonough

The acceptance of Jesus is an act of love. It is the result of an encounter with a dimension of existence which puts unique beauty and meaning into life. It is an experience by which one is transfigured, not in any external or theatrical way, but by having a center to his being, a point of reference which all things and men, including oneself, are judged. The acceptance of Jesus as Lord means that a Person once walked the earth who exemplified what a human being could be if he thought, felt and acted in a certain way, and that henceforth this Person shall be one's Master and Model. It is very simple. It is a matter of falling in love with a transcendingly magnificent soul. To be a true Christian this is all that is required: that one love Jesus Christ the Lord and faithfully serve His spirit.

This matter of being a Christian is not one of theology; it is one of value. When you fall in love with a person, the attraction, the dedication, the experience all precede any intellectual analysis of love. All you know is that you love. If it is true love, you can never reduce that love to reasons. Elizabeth Barrett Browning put the matter clearly in one of her Portuguese Sonnets:

"If thou must love me, let it be for nought
Except for love's sake only. Do not say
'I love her for her smile—her look—her way
Of speaking gently—for a trick of thought
That falls in well with mine, and certes brought
A sense of pleasant ease on such a day' —
For these things in themselves, Beloved, may

Be changed, or change for thee—and love,
so wrought
May be unwrought so.
But love me for love's sake."

We love Jesus the Lord for love's sake, too, because when His life is told to us, we know that such love as he showed is the rarest treasure of existence. What makes true Christians is the common object of their love: Jesus Christ.

If we could leave it at that! If we could say with almost naive and childish simplicity, "I do not know why I love him, I just do!" But man is an intellectual creature; he wants to know the reasons for everything; he wants to dissect and explain everything. It never dawns on some people that much of experience is beyond explanation. Why do you like flowers? Why do the stars give you a sense of expansion and peace? Why does a beautiful child fill you with wonder? Why does a circle seem an object of delight? The only true answer is that one doesn't know why; they just do.

One could try to give reasons for his loves, but they would never really make them understandable. The same is true about the love for Jesus the Lord. Theologians down through the centuries have speculated about the nature of Jesus. Was He divine or human? Was He God or Man? People have debated these questions for generations, taken sides and been vicious. They have started new denominations and sects over some theory about Jesus, and all those who have not agreed with their tenets have been excluded. But this is as ridiculous as finding a group of people who love America and then branding them because they love their country for different reasons. The reasons are interesting, sometimes they are even enlightening. But they are not the love. Theology is a group of reasons, a group of analyses; sometimes, a group of absurdities. But love is its own justification and its own end. To those who love Jesus and acknowledge His supremacy, no other reasons are necessary.

OUTLIVING OUR PROBLEMS

Ford Lewis

It is common to speak of the problem of evil as one of the unsolved mysteries perennially facing man. If we include in the term all pain and suffering, all disappointment and sorrow, all failure and futility, in short, all the unpleasantness we get from life, it becomes a problem whose existence even the most confirmed optimist has to recognize. And it is most perplexing of all to men who believe in God. How are we to understand the existence of evil in a world created by a God who is omnipotent and perfectly good? In proportion as God is held to be all loving, all wise and all powerful, the existence of evil becomes a deeper mystery. "If God exists, whence evil?" runs the ancient question. In trying to provide an answer, we find, in the phrase of Lotze, that "our thought is at the end of its tether" rather quickly. No wholly satisfactory answer has been found.

It is not our explanation of evil which interests me primarily at this time, attractive though that is as a field of study, but our reactions to it and the results of our encounters with it in our daily lives. By evil, we in the Hebrew-Christian tradition have usually referred to all the unpleasant contents of Pandora's Box which man has introduced into his life through wilful and open sin. This theology is becoming almost impossible to defend, however, because it presupposes a two-sided world, a universal system which is contradictory at its very core. Good is matched by evil, light is opposed by darkness, every heaven has its hell, and the entire universe, like the veil of the temple, is rent in twain with a basic dichotomy.

In our tradition this dualistic theology probably stems from ancient Persia, where we can easily imagine the nomadic shepherds would find such concepts natural to their environment. They spent their lives coping with extremes. The weather was usually very wet or very dry, quite hot or uncomfortably cold. The land was either very lush or very barren. The people were either very rich or very poor. And the theology that developed and was passed on to us indirectly through the Babylonian captivity was as rigorous as the physical environment and as starkly contradictory, for there was little "in between" experience to soften and moderate it.

To say that the dualistic concept of good and evil is unsound does not, of course, banish tragedy and pathos from our lives. The fact of evil, in its broad meaning, is ever present in our awareness, or hovering in the background, and ignoring it or trying to re-define it out of existence doesn't change it. We may observe of evil in general, as Jesus did of poverty in particular, that it is something we have with us always.

The first requirement, then, in any serious effort to outlive our problems, is to understand just what they are, to isolate and describe them as honestly as possible, leaving none out, and to recognize that no matter how long we work at correcting them we will never finish the job. Outliving our problems has nothing to do with length of years, "outlive" in this context does not mean to outlast. It does not mean the eventual discovery, after long and faithful searching, of a secret formula whereby we can banish from our lives once and for all "the sins that so easily beset us." "Outlive," in the sense in which I use it, correlates not with a quantity of years, but with a quality of life.

In dealing with our problems we often assume that if we can just hang on and wait them out, time will take care of them. I recall that as a growing boy, I naively assumed that when I became a man I would suddenly be in a position to "put away childish things," especially all childish uncertainties and insecurities. But I gradually came to see that this hope was based on a misconception. Often we are able to outwait or outgrow some particular failure, but always there are problems in the abstract waiting to rush in and fill the vacuum.

But even now I sometimes catch myself taking for granted that much older persons than I have somehow managed to "drive life into a corner" and make peace with it. Not long ago I called on a friend in her nineties and opened the conversation by asking her how she was. "I have my problems," she said, "but I still permit myself to think I might outlive them." It was this incident which gave me the idea for this article, and the title. When I came away, I realized with greater clarity than ever that no one ever outlasts the evil in the world.

Methuselah may have come as close to it as anyone, in the legendary account given in the Old Testament. In connection with that, it is often said that the man who had the longest life has the shortest biography. He lived 969 years, and he died. This is the only significant reference to the ancient patriarch. When we feel prone to outlive our problems, the problems of war and peace, of freedom and repression, by merely outlasting them, "sitting them out," while we pile up year after year of wasted longevity we can contemplate with profit the life of Methuselah.

Nor are we any more successful when we try to outrun our obligations. Someone said to Socrates that a certain man had not been improved by his travels in any noticeable way at all. "I can believe it," the wise man answered, "he took himself along." Montaigne adds, in relating this incident, that "ambition, avarice, irresolution, fear, and the lusts do not leave us, though we have changed our country. . . . It is not enough to get away from the people. We must sequester and regain possession of ourselves."

The legendary figure of Jonah is the classical example in our religious literature of the futility of hiding from God and dodging what we know to be our duty. Like Jonah, we always become swallowed up in greater difficulties than the ones from which we are running. Even if we could escape the things that are troubling us at any given time by going on a trip or taking a vacation, even if we could "fly to the uttermost parts of the earth" and find that God was not there in the form of the still small voice of conscience, we would be far greater losers than we can imagine. Our problems are the means, and the only means, by which we achieve our true status and become our true selves. Without them life would be no more than a vegetable existence. It would be heartbreaking to watch a baby learning to walk if we did not know that out of all his false starts and awkward stumblings comes the sure and steady ability to carry himself like a man, and that it comes in no other way.

This simple example should teach us that error in any form, whether it be sickness, or ignorance, or hatred, or whatever it may be, is transitory and impermanent. Pain is not the object toward which all prior existence is striving, but joy. Joy is an end in itself, and pain, which is the "feeling of our finiteness," when we come to comprehend its true dimension and purpose, is only a means which life uses to attain the ultimate end of joy. Writing on this subject, Rabindranath Tagore tells us that man

> . . . has felt in the depths of his life that what appears as imperfect is the manifestation of the perfect; just as a man who has an ear for music realizes the perfection of a song, while in fact he is only listening to a succession of notes. Man has found out the great paradox, that what is limited is not imprisoned within its limits; it is ever moving, and therewith shedding its finitude every moment. In fact, imperfection is not a negation of perfectness; finitude is not contradictory to infinity: they are but completeness manifested in parts, infinity revealed within bounds.

To be finite, that is, to be human and subject to the usual human limitations, can be pretty perplexing sometimes, more especially because we are able in our mind's eye to catch glimpses of the infinite from time to time, and to imagine a better world, a world without all this frustration. But this condition need not discourage us as long as our finitude is capable of indefinite expansion, as ours seems to be. Alexander is said to have wept because there were no more worlds

left him to conquer. When our knowledge cannot be extended, when all possibilities for growth have been exhausted, then it may be time to find our human finitude an evil. When our world is conquered, we may weep. But let us be more certain than Alexander was that such is the case. Meanwhile, let us strive.

Navigators along the waters of our coasts rely heavily on the lighthouses placed at strategic intervals on the rocks and shoals when they get ready to make port. Each light has its own distinct phase of flashing and occulting, or remaining dark. One light will flash brightly for five seconds and remain dark for twelve. Another will flash on for three seconds and occult for eight. Each light is easily identified by its flashing-occulting phase. A light will give an experienced sailor a pretty good idea where he is, even though he may not have sighted land for weeks. And the significant thing is that the dark intervals mean just as much to him as the intervals of light.

All of us are in some way navigators in the dark, searching for some snug harbor of security. We are scanning the lighthouses of experience for some sign of where we are. And we cannot do without the occulting phases of life, dark though they may appear to us now, for they tell us as much about life as the bright phases do, and more.

To wish to be rid of our trials is to wish away the challenges which bring out those responses in us that give us greatness of character. The very problems of which we so often despair are the raw materials of self-realization, the gateways to achievement. Without them, life loses its stress and, without stress, without the dynamic tension between what is and what should be, life would be a very dull experience indeed.

It takes tension in a violin string to produce music and tension in the bow to bring it out. Perhaps that which we call evil is there to provide the divine tension in our character necessary to produce in us lives of beauty and harmony and goodness.

A story preserved in the Hebrew tradition relates that Rabbi Johanan, reflecting one day on the evil that had befallen his people, cried out "Alas, alas! Satan has burned the temple and massacred the righteous and dispersed the righteous remnant of Israel throughout the world; and God still permits Satan to go about his evil work." So great was the rabbi's concern with the evil state of affairs that he fasted from one Sabbath to the next. Seeing his great anxiety, God thereupon delivered up Satan to him a captive in chains. The rabbi filled his mouth with lead and shut him up in a copper cauldron.

But all passion ceased in the hearts of men, all striving away from evil and toward the good, all moral effort was relaxed, and men became neither good nor bad, for lacking knowledge of one, they had no means of being conscious of the other. Then Rabbi Johanan opened the cauldron and said, "Let Satan be free to accomplish the work of God."

That which appears in the foreground of experience as evil and error can often be seen by a closer look as the unrefined circumstance moving out on the way to becoming good. Evil is simply that phenomenon which has not yet been made into good, pain that aspect of experience which has not yet been realized in pleasure, and sorrow, that facet of our total life which has not yet found itself in joy. Hatred is not the other side of the coin of love, it is love itself which is frustrated and dammed up, and has not found a way to flow freely. Selfishness is not the opposite of generosity, it is generosity itself turned inward, unaware of how to give itself freely. Death is not the dark side of the moon of our lives. It is life itself at its final stage of fulfillment, at once the culmination of and prologue of life.

Outliving these ancient problems does not call for the speed to outrun them in space nor the endurance to outlast them in time. It requires a quality of life, it calls for outliving our daily dying on the vine, outgiving our selfish hoarding of material bric-a-brac, and for outloving our hating.

PRESERVE ME FROM MY CALLING'S SNARE

Old folks will recognize this line from one of Charles Wesley's hymns: "Forth in thy name, O Lord, I go." It was deemed not worthy of inclusion in our present hymnal, but at least this line is worthy of remembrance. Every calling has its snare. It may seem absolutely proof against the Evil One and all his crafty ways, with an innocence that defies the most ingenious imp of Satan to deduce from it the slightest temptation or pitfall. But there are no such sin-proof occupations. Every calling, however innocuous it may seem, has its snare; and, Lord, preserve me from it.

What is true of callings is true of the stages of civilization. We move from one to the next higher, and congratulate ourselves that we have moved out of the clutches of the old set of temptations, and may relax our moral vigilance. But we soon find that we have but moved into the clutches of a new set, even more insidious; and that unless we keep our moral vigilance alert we shall involve our future in unsuspected perils.

The modern house-wife has good reason to exult in her blessings. In her cosy apartment, steam-heated, with janitor service, and with her deep-freeze, refrigerator, electric range, dispose-all, dish and clothes washers, vacuum cleaner, and shelves well stocked with canned goods and "mixes," all she needs is her row of push-buttons, her can-opener, and two hours elapsed time. Behold, her house-work is done. The rest of the day is free time, blessed leisure.

Fortunate woman! But has she kept out of her calling's snare? Has she bethought herself that leisure time, unless properly used, very speedily becomes Public Enemy Number One? A democracy like ours rests on just one indispensable and uncompromising prerequisite, the high quality of its citizens. Unless they are intelligent and well informed, public spirited and morally responsible and reliable then farewell, a long farewell to our democracy. Has she reminded herself that the most profitable source of good citizenship is the good home; and that she herself is unavoidably, ex officio, the tutelary deity of home?

Of course, in the old days home meant, among many other things, a cluster of backbreaking exactions: the storm windows to be put up and taken down each year; the front side-walk to be kept free of snow; the back yard, with its clothes-line, wood-pile, and ash-heap; the attic stored with truck that had nought but a sentimental value; the cellar to be kept clean and orderly lest it prove a fatal fire-hazard. But it was just these drudgeries that meant, first, home is something to take care of; second, home is something to love, depend on, leave with regret, return to with deep thanksgiving, stay in with solid satisfaction; and third, home is a potent discipline in making American citizens. Has she provided her push-button home with the moral equivalent of that discipline? It is still true that the hand that rocks the cradles rules the world. A certain greatness of character is still necessary to be a real house-wife, whether ancient, medieval, or modern. May God bless her, and preserve her from her calling's snare.

—Contributed

PRAYER

O Lord, our God, in whom there is no variableness neither shadow of turning, we bless thee for the power which is never weary, and for the understanding love which never fails nor falters. Thou knowest all our dust and frailty. In thy mercy thou dost send us the refreshment of night and sleep, giving us the rest which thou dost never need. We bless thee that under thy guardian care we have slept secure.

And now as thy morning sun rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race, we lift up our hearts in grateful praise for thy gift of a new day, a new chance, a new stage of our earthly pilgrimage, a new discovery in the adventure of living. Let this morning light be a symbol of thy day-spring of light and hope within. And grant us, in the brightness of this new day, to start afresh, forgetting the old, far-off, unhappy things, and leaving behind us the memory of yesterday's wrong, yesterday's shame, or sorrow, or humiliation. Grant us to carry over into this new day, nothing but a hopeful penitence for all by-gone sins and mistakes; and a hopeful resolution that, having learned the lessons of the past, we shall live this day and all coming days with at least the same intelligence that our children use in learning to play their little games, or that we use in learning to be skilled in our earthly crafts and professions. Let it never be said of us that our service unto thee is wanting in our best intelligence; or that while we give the best powers of mind and heart to our earthly concerns we are satisfied to worship thee with casual words of homage, or to serve thee with stilted professions of loyalty and fidelity. Lord, let the thought of thee never come to us without bringing us to our knees in adoration. Fill our minds with the memory of our Christ whose foremost joy it was to do thy will; who dreaded nothing so much as the outer darkness of thy disappointment and displeasure; who craved nothing so strongly as thy blest word of proud approval: This is my beloved son, in whom I am well-pleased. Make it so with us, Lord. Write thy name upon our foreheads that all who see may know us for thy men and women, guided first of all by thy truth, consecrated above all else to thy purposes of eternal good. So, instead of worshipping thee with the languid thoughts, and the feeble impulses of weariness, with whatever strength is left over from our day's service of earthly ambitions, we may be never so wholly at our best as when we stand before thee in prayer, and never so competent and efficient as when we are about our Father's business.

We bless thee for thy loving, patient, untiring forgiveness; that thou dost not hold against us the sins, disappointments and self-betrayals of the past; that thou art forever looking ahead to find in us the truer, bigger, and nobler men and women we can be. Let the thought of thy confidence in us awaken our self-confidence, humble and true, grateful and resolved. We have been only thy broken reeds, but thou hast not cut us off; only thy smoking candles, but thou hast not quenched us. Help us and bless us, that though it take a life-time of trial and error, the day may come when we shall raise our heads before thee, and shine before thee as candles of the Lord, burning strong and clear to the glory of thy holy name. *Amen.*

EASTER THOUGHTS

Taken together Paul's epistles are the oldest portion of the New Testament, having all been written by the year 60 A. D., which is four years before the Gospel of Mark was written. Paul therefore is the first human voice to tell us anything about the Resurrection. He was in Jerusalem at the time, but as an enemy of this Jesus of Nazareth and his followers. He was disposed to approve of the fatal treatment that Jesus had suffered for claiming to be the expected Messiah. If Paul heard any rumors, as he well might have, to the effect that this leader, Jesus, had risen from the dead after his crucifixion, he certainly dismissed them with complete indifference, even scorn.

At the moment Paul had no idea how supremely important this resurrection was destined to become to him. Had any such fore-knowledge been possible he doubtless would have made the most of his chance to learn all he could of the mysterious event. It is a lost opportunity which we regret even more than he. As it was, he had certain memories, and from his careful examination of these he formed his interpretation of the mystery. It is contained in his first epistle to the Corinthians, and has great importance for us because it is our first quiet, thoughtful attempt to understand the Resurrection.

His conclusions are somewhat as follows: The essential part of man is the soul, which is imperishable. This soul can inhabit the kind of body best adapted to whatever environment exists at the moment. So long as the soul is a sojourner on this earth it must inhabit the flesh and blood body adapted to earthly conditions. Paul calls this the "natural body."

But the moment the soul's earthly sojourn ceases the natural body is discarded and is reduced to its constituent elements, while the soul steps at once into another body which is of a type adapted to the new environment awaiting it. Paul calls this the "spiritual body," but attempts no description of it, for nobody, not even he, knows anything about it. Paul is up-and-down, definite, categorical in his assertion that a natural body cannot enter the spiritual realm. "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God."

Furthermore, this transference of the soul from the natural to the spiritual body is nothing contrary to the Law of God. It is not confined to Jesus, or to any select few. It is not a sporadic experience, it is universal and reliable. In fact, Paul does not hesitate to deduce a universal law from the single experience of Jesus. We may take it to our comfort, and as an assurance to us, that if it happened to Jesus it will happen to us, to every one of us. "As in Christ all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive."

Here then is Paul's interpretation of the Something-that-must-have-happened in that garden on the first Easter Morning. The natural body of Jesus was discarded to perish as all bodies do—outworn, empty, and useless. The soul of Jesus entered its spiritual body and continued its traffic with other beloved souls, even though they were as yet pent in their natural bodies, appearing to them as spiritual bodies always appear, in a vesture that eyes of flesh cannot see, and with a voice that ears of flesh cannot hear. He knew, because it was so that Christ had appeared to him on the Damascus Road. Many of us feel that Paul has given the right interpretation, the only one possible; and are content to accept it as sufficient, and to understand Easter in the way it suggests.

But some of us prefer to go on and examine whatever further testimony is available. So we turn to the Gospel of Mark dating from the year 64, and the first of the Gospels to be written. We had already noticed that Paul makes no allusion whatever to the birth of Jesus; and we notice the same omission in Mark. No birth story; the Gospel begins with Jesus a grown man, being baptized by John in the Jordan. If we are wise enough to read the Gospel in the new Standard Revised Version, we find that it ends with the eighth verse of the 16th chapter: "they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid." It is complete, and rounded off. But we are referred to several foot-notes. One of them tells us that "other texts and versions add to Chapter 16, verses 9-20"; then there follows the passage we know in our King James Version as the last twelve verses of the Gospel of Mark.

All this provokes some thought. To the picture that we have constructed from the hints Paul gives us, Mark adds one detail in Chapter 16, verse 5: the young man clad in white, seated, for all the world as though he had been posted there to wait for the women and tell them that Jesus had risen and gone to Galilee.

Then, in the addition as printed in the foot note, we are told other details: he appeared to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had cast seven devils, and when she reported the appearance to the disciples, they would not believe her. Then he appears in another form to two of the disciples as they were walking together; and when these two went back and told the others they would not believe. Then he appears to the entire band as they sat at meat, and scolds them for not believing, and charges them to go forth and preach to the whole creation, and promises to corroborate their statements with signs. Then he is taken up into heaven to sit at the right hand of God.

What catches our attention at once in all this is the note of tentative hesitancy with which the details are narrated, as though admitting that the story is hard to believe and that their own incredulity will not be a surprise. Turning to Matthew we find this entire story of his appearances, somewhat amplified and adorned with details, properly incorporated as a regular portion of the last chapter, chapter 28, of Matthew's Gospel. We notice that the note of hesitancy has all but disappeared; we have its last vestige in verse 17: "but some doubted." In the Luke story we find the same lingering incredulity in verse 11: "but these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them." Yet, whereas in Matthew and Mark the story is told in a manner indicating that the narrator would not be surprised at their unbelief, in Luke the story is told in a manner indicating that the narrator *is* surprised at their unbelief. More details are added, chiefly the walk to Emmaus. The whole account takes on what we would expect from Luke—a quality of haunting beauty. In the Gospel of John we find the story in its full and perfect proportions, occupying two whole chapters, containing several wholly new events, a wealth of corroborative detail, and told with complete assurance as though the narrator were relating an authentic historical tale.

Now all this leads us steadily to the conjecture that these Birth and Resurrection stories constitute a distinct literature in themselves; a literature of later origin and far more rapid growth than the proper Gospels. We find it timidly, almost apologetically offered in the Mark appendix; ampler and more confidently told in Matthew and Luke; and long, richly varied, detailed, and told with absolute assurance in John. Evidently the story has acquired the factitious authority of eager and universal acceptance. If there is anything in this conjecture it warns us that we must read these Birth and Resurrection stories in a different mood, and with another part of our minds; not with the exacting, critical part, but with the sympathetic, understanding part; not as history, but as evidence of man's eagerness to bring his tributes of love and adoration to the memory of Jesus. In short we must consult our own tastes and preferences, and accept them or not as we ourselves think best.

All of us, however, the most liberal as well as the most orthodox, can find a common standing-ground in Paul's interpretation of the Something-that-must-have-happened on the first Easter morning. Flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God. Hearts are dust, but hearts' loves remain. What is excellent, as God lives, is permanent, and made so in his own ways. The fleshly body is sown; the spiritual body is raised. In that interpretation there are no excommunications. We can all stand together to welcome Easter Morning; and to hope and pray and sing in gratitude to him who came that we may have life and have it more abundantly; whose presence is still a Reality in millions of loyal hearts; and whose voice is still our best beloved and surest guide.

The Nominating Committee deeply regrets the impossibility of presenting a complete report in time for this issue of THE UNITARIAN CHRISTIAN. However, there will be ample time for such a report to be drawn up and sent to all members before the annual meeting.

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Report of the Nominating Committee

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